

**REMARKS**

Claims 1-25 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 1, 2 and 20 are amended.

Applicants appreciate the courtesies extended by Examiners Rocca and Dickson during the March 26, 2007 personal interview. Applicants' separate record of the personal interview appears below.

An Information Disclosure Statement was filed on February 20, 2007. It is requested that the Examiner consider the references cited in that Information Disclosure Statement and return an initialed Form PTO-1449 to Applicants' representative.

Claim 20 was objected to and has been amended in accordance with the suggestion in the Office Action. It is respectfully requested that the objection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-5, 7 and 10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over White, U.S. Patent No. 3,392,599. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

As discussed during the personal interview, White fails to disclose an energy-absorption-load-changing means being adapted to change (1) the absorption load in accordance with displacement of a steering column in at least a first direction when a secondary collision of the occupant with a steering column occurs in a first direction and a second direction when the secondary collision of the occupant with the steering column occurs in a second direction, as recited in claim 1, or (2) an absorption load path, as recited in claim 2.

White fails to disclose all of the features recited in claims 1 and 2 because White's steering column and energy absorbing device only move in the axial direction of the steering column. When a sufficient impact load is applied, an upper cylinder 26 telescopes forwardly on a lower cylinder 28 (col. 4, lines 37-56). Because White only discloses a movement in the axial direction, White does not change the absorption load in accordance with displacement

of a steering column in at least a first direction and a second direction; or change an absorption load path, as recited in claim 2.

Page 2 of the Office Action refers to White's Figs. 7 and 8. However, Figs. 7 and 8 only illustrate energy absorbing performance curves.

It is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-4, 12-14, 16, 18 and 23 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Yamaguchi et al. (Yamaguchi), U.S. Patent No. 4,989,898. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Yamaguchi, similar to White, fails to disclose all of the features recited in claims 1 and 2 because Yamaguchi's steering column and energy absorbing device also only move in the axial direction of the steering column. When a sufficient impact load is applied, the steering column 12 and the column bracket 14 are shifted obliquely downwardly in a forward direction along the slot 42 of a member 40 (col. 4, lines 20-49). Because Yamaguchi only discloses a movement in the axial direction, Yamaguchi does not change the absorption load in accordance with displacement of a steering column in at least a first direction and a second direction; or change an absorption load path, as recited in claim 2.

Page 4 of the Office Action refers to Yamaguchi's Fig. 11. However, Yamaguchi does not have a Fig. 11.

It is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-6, 8, 9, 13-15, 17 and 19-21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Matsumoto et al. (Matsumoto), U.S. Patent No. 5,961,146. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Matsumoto, similar to White, fails to disclose all of the features recited in claims 1 and 2 because Matsumoto's steering column and energy absorbing device also only move in the axial direction of the steering column. When a sufficient impact load is applied, a tilt

adjusting bolt 18 is displaced backward relative to the steering column 1 and an energy absorbing member 16 is pulled against a bolt 18 (col. 7, lines 20-45). This similar approach is used in the sixth embodiment (which includes Fig. 11 referenced in the Office Action).

Because Matsumoto only discloses a movement in the axial direction, Matsumoto does not change the absorption load in accordance with displacement of a steering column in at least a first direction and a second direction; or change an absorption load path, as recited in claim 2.

It is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1, 3, 4, 12 and 20-22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Hibino, U.S. Patent No. 6,224,104. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Hibino, similar to White, fails to disclose all of the features recited in claims 1 and 2 because Hibino's steering column and energy absorbing device also only move in the axial direction of the steering column. When a sufficient impact load is applied, the steering column 1 moves obliquely forward such that a bent portion 63 of an absorber 61 is latched by a latch piece 43 and plastic deformation portions 65a, 65b are drawn progressively around a drawing pin 49 (col. 5, lines 23-32). This similar approach is used in the second embodiment (which includes Figs. 7 and 8 referenced in the Office Action).

Because Hibino only discloses a movement in the axial direction, Hibino does not change the absorption load in accordance with displacement of a steering column in at least a first direction and a second direction; or change an absorption load path, as recited in claim 2.

It is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1, 2, 16, 18 and 23-25 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Ben-Rhouma et al. (Ben-Rhouma), U.S. Patent No. 6,234,528. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Ben-Rhouma, similar to White, fails to disclose all of the features recited in claims 1 and 2 because Ben-Rhouma's steering column and energy absorbing device also only move in the axial direction of the steering column. Ben-Rhouma discloses windings 41-43 mounted on a tubular roller 50, with the windings 41-43 having a rectilinear portion 44-46 and a respective free end 47-49 curved around a holding rod 31. Because Ben-Rhouma only discloses a structure that can move in the axial direction, Ben-Rhouma does not change the absorption load in accordance with displacement of a steering column in at least a first direction and a second direction; or change an absorption load path, as recited in claim 2.

It is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

Claim 22 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) over Matsumoto in view of Struble et al. (Struble), U.S. Patent No. 6,189,929. The rejection is respectfully traversed.

Struble fails to overcome the deficiencies of Matsumoto as applied to claims 1 and 2. It is respectfully requested that the rejection be withdrawn.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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Date: April 3, 2007

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